

# Multicultural Education and Language Ideology in South Korea

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The ideology of one nation, one race, and one language has been constructed and reinforced in the Korean mind over the course of its history. However, a recently growing number of migrants in South Korea have challenged this ideology, and the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) announced the *Educational Support Plan for Children from Multicultural Backgrounds* (ESP) in 2006 to address the needs of multicultural children in schools. Under this initiative, the national curriculum was revised to raise the understanding of diverse cultures among all students, and textbooks were developed under direction from MEHRD. Taking a critical perspective toward language policy, the current study aims to offer a historical account of the emergence of monolingual ideology in South Korea and then to analyze how this ideology has shaped recent multicultural education policies.

## Introduction

South Korea is typically considered an ethnically and linguistically homogeneous nation by its nationals as well as outsiders. This ideology of one nation, one race, and one language has gradually emerged over the course of Korean history. However, a recently growing number of migrants in South Korea, coupled with the globalization of the world, have challenged such ideology, and visible changes are starting to be seen within the nation. Many social activists have started to advocate for the rights of migrant workers and foreign brides, and the government has responded by implementing practical measures to improve the lives of these foreign residents (Park, 2007; Seol, 2000). In the educational sector, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD, but currently known as the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST)) first addressed the needs of multicultural children through the announcement of the *Educational Support Plan for Children from Multicultural Backgrounds* (ESP) in 2006. Along with this multicultural initiative, the national curriculum was revised to raise the understanding of diverse cultures among all students, and textbooks were developed under direction from MEHRD. By conceptualizing language policy as ideological discourse with various layers of indexicality (Blommaert, 2005), the current study aims to disentangle the overt and covert goals of ESP and to reflect on the meaning of multicultural education in South Korea.

In order to do so, a theoretical framework will be first introduced, interweaving insights from linguistic anthropology and critical discourse analysis (Blommaert, 2005; Fairclough, 2003). Then, I will offer a historical account of the emergence

of the dominant language ideology in Korea and discuss potential challenges to the nationalist agenda due to the rapidly growing minority population. The latter part of the study will be devoted to a discourse analysis of ESP and in particular the *Guidelines for Middle School Korean Language Arts Textbook Writing*, one of the MEHRD textbook writing guidelines under the revised 2007 national curriculum.

### Language Policy and Ideology as a Field of Contestation

According to Menken (2008), No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the current educational law passed by the U.S. Congress in 2001, can be regarded as a de facto language policy. Even though NCLB calls for “assessment for all students” (p. 3), which seems to support the linguistic and academic development of traditionally minoritized students, the standardized form of testing proposed by NCLB is designed for English native students, requiring English proficiency rather than understanding of content (Menken, 2008). In this sense, educational policy fosters a certain language ideology, in this case a deficit orientation toward bilingualism, serving the interest of a dominant group. Analogous to NCLB, the South Korea’s current policy on multicultural education, ESP, can be considered language policy, in that its overt goal to raise the multicultural awareness among all students implicitly supports certain ideologies that may lead to maintaining or transforming the current language practices in school.

Shohamy (2006) states that “the real language planning of a political and social entity should be observed not merely through *declared policy statements* but rather through *a variety of devices* that are used to perpetuate language practices, often in covert and implicit ways” (pp. 45-46, emphasis added). Therefore, ESP merits discourse analysis that is not limited to the textual meaning of the language used in policy statements but also extends to different layers of contexts and ideologies the language indexes. When policy statements are taken as one-dimensional discourse with fixed textual meanings, one may fall into a common fallacy of what Collins (1996) refers to as *textualism*, which readily assumes “the fixity of text, the transparency of language, and the universality of shared, available meaning” (p. 204). Challenging this fixed text approach, Blommaert (2005) offers an insightful approach to discourse attending to its indexical nature:

Discourse offers us opportunities for an analysis that addresses simultaneity—the occurrence of a single, unique discursive form—as something in which we see, through indexical links, various layers of socially meaningful elements. The various layers are meaningful because they derive from different ideologies that operate at different levels of historicity. (pp. 174-175)

Thus, language policy as a type of discourse is contextual and ideological, in that its seeming coherence and simultaneity is actually constructed through what Blommaert (2005) refers to as *entextualization*: “the process by means of which discourses are successively or simultaneously decontextualised and metadiscursively recontextualised” from different times and spaces where different ideologies are at play (p. 47). For instance, in the discussion of Belgian integration policies, Blommaert (2005) suggests that the original concept of integration authorized by the Belgian government has changed through various

forms of entextualization to meet the needs of different political actors. In this sense, language policy should be analyzed by tracing its pretextual and intertextual connections to different layers of contexts and ideologies and by questioning whose interests are served through such constructions of discourse.

With this approach, ideologies can be identified in texts as “representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 9). Here, it should be noted that the establishment of ideology is a dialogic process. In order to maintain social relations of power in favor of the dominant group, not only should discourse be constructed for the dominant group’s interest, but also such discourse should be accepted by dominated groups, often contrary to their own interest. For instance, regarding the presence of dominant languages, Bourdieu (1991) explains that “the recognition of legitimate language is more widely accepted than it is possessed” (as cited in Heinrich, 2012, p. 18). If the role of dominated groups is considered in the legitimizing process of ideology, it should be also noted that only some ideologies are taken up by society as intended while others are resisted and renegotiated, which leads to changing social relations of power. Often, what Hornberger and Johnson (2007) refer to as *ideological* and *implementational space* opens up to represent the voice of others whether it was the intended outcome of policies or not. While language policy often reproduces the language beliefs and practices of the existing power relations, it is also a field of contestation and negotiation, in that even in cases of dominant ideologies, room exists for different social groups to bring in their voices and interests.

Thus, in this paper, I conceptualize language policy as ideological discourse with different layers of meaning that often serve the interests of authoritative actors in the face of opposing interests. This understanding of language policy uncovers the role of ideology in maintaining or changing existing social practices and beliefs beyond the text. In the following section, I will first discuss how monolingual and ethnic nationalism has emerged in South Korea by examining historical events and the writings of eminent scholars over the course of Korean history. Later sections will be devoted to analyzing how this ideology is both challenged and implicitly supported by the multicultural initiative of ESP through covert strategies of entextualization.

### **Ideology of One Nation, One People and One Language**

Compared to many other countries around the world, Korea can be considered a relatively homogeneous nation in terms of language use. Sixty-seven million people living in South and North Korea use Korean as their first language, and there is no other indigenous language spoken in the Korean peninsula, in contrast to the long-standing presence of many indigenous languages in its neighboring countries such as Japan, China, and Taiwan (Song, 2012). Historical records indicate that languages other than Korean had been spoken until the late seventh century when Silla, one of the three kingdoms in the Korean peninsula, conquered the other two kingdoms in 676 CE (Janhunen, 1996). However, following the peninsula’s unification under Silla, there was a wave of linguistic homogenization, and today Korean is the only indigenous language that has survived on the peninsula (Song, 2012). Thus, the Korean language is closely related to Korean national identity, and

this relationship has been reinforced and intertwined with the ideology of ethnic nationalism especially following Japanese colonial rule from 1910 to 1945.

During World War II, Japan enforced assimilation policies based on colonial racism, which claimed that Koreans and Japanese were of the same racial group and that Koreans were in a subordinate position in the hierarchy of the Japanese empire (Shin, 2006). Under the slogan, *nissen ittai* [日鮮一體, Japan and Korea as One], the Japanese language was to be exclusively used in the media and in schools. Newspapers and magazines were no longer published in Korean, and the Korean Language Society was disbanded. Koreans had to change their names to Japanese names and worship at Shinto shrines, which symbolized Japanese beliefs and ethics (Seekins, 1990). The aim of these policies was, according to a contemporary historian, Ki-Baik Lee (1984), "to eradicate consciousness of Korean national identity, roots and all, and thus to obliterate the very existence of the Korean people from the face of the earth" (p. 353).

In response to these assimilationist policies, the need to assert the distinctiveness of Koreans as one nation and one ethnicity became a pressing concern among Korean nationalists. In particular, Chae-ho Sin, a leading social activist and historian, first introduced the ethnicity-based national history of Korea in his works, such as *Doksa Sillon* [讀史新論, A New Reading of History] (1908/1987). The preface of *Doksa Sillon* reflects well his approach to the writings of the national history: "If one dismisses the *minjok* [民族, ethnicity], there is no history" (as cited in Schmid, 1997, p. 32). He claimed that the roots of Korea as an ethnic nation can be traced back to one ancestor, Dangun, and that this original ethnic tie had been well preserved through the nation's constant battles against foreign forces. He adopts the concept of a *pure bloodline* in his definition of nation as "an organic body formed out of the spirit of a people. . . descended through a single pure bloodline" (as cited in Shin, 2006, p. 38). This rhetoric was taken up by Gwangsu Lee, a leading writer and scholar during the colonial era, who claimed that a nation should be built on the three basic elements of bloodline, personality, and culture, and that "Koreans are without a doubt a unitary nation in blood and culture" (as cited in Shin, 2006, p. 49).

These resistant discourses against *nissen ittai* and the exclusive use of Japanese were also closely tied to the promotion of the national Korean language and its indigenous written form, *Hangeul*. Si-gyeong Ju, acclaimed as the founder of modern Korean linguistics, first coined the term, *Hangeul* [great script] between 1910 and 1913, to replace the existing term, *Eonmun* [諺文, vernacular script], in his attempts to promote the superiority of the script created by King Sejong in the mid-fifteenth century (Yeon, 2010). In his "Essay on Korean Language and Letters" (1907), he states that "the people of the entire country should value, love, and use *our* language and script as the basic and primary language of *our* country" (as cited in P. Lee, 1996, pp. 425-426).

The ideology of ethnic and linguistic nationalism created through this shared colonial experience has continued since the independence of Korea in 1945 until today. Although Korea was soon after divided into North and South, the ethnic homogeneity of North and South Korea was hardly questioned (Song, 2012, p. 2). Also, independence from Japan fueled linguistic purist movements in both North and South Korea to rid Korean vocabulary of Japanese influence to recover "the purity and integrity of the Korean language" (Park, 1989, p. 116). Standard Korean

has also been strictly codified in both countries respectively as *pyojuneo* [標準語, standard language] based on the speech of Seoul in South Korea and *munhwaeo* [文化語, cultured language] based on the speech of Pyeongyang in North Korea.

To sum up, the national identity in Korea<sup>1</sup> encompasses “territorial, ethnic, linguistic and cultural identities” (Seekins, 1990, p. 180). Within the Korean context, race and ethnicity are almost used as synonyms, unless referring to situations outside Korea. The notion of ethnicity in Korea is based on a shared history and language in a common national territory, and the race, symbolized as the pure bloodline, is a natural part of this ethnic identity (Shin, 2006). Also, the Korean language and its written form, *Hangeul*, serve as one of the salient markers that represent Korean national identity (Park, 2007). Many Koreans, therefore, have shared a strong belief and pride in an ethnically and linguistically homogeneous nation.

This sense of collectivity has typically been considered one of the contributing factors to the rapid industrialization and economic development of South Korea from the 1960s to the 1990s, which made the nation one of the Asian Tigers along with Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan. Popular public slogans promoted by the government at that time show the significant role nationalist ideology played in the nation’s economic development: “*gugwiseongyang* [國位宣揚, enhancing national prestige], *minjokjoongheung* [民族中興, regenerating the nation], *gungnyeoksinjang suchuljeungdae* [國力伸張 輸出增大, enhancing national strength through exports]” (Kim, 1986, p. 43).

On the other hand, nationalism based on a shared sense of ethnicity and language has also resulted in the intolerance of diverse cultural and ethnic identities within Korean society. Especially right after the Korean War (1950-1953), there were many discriminatory practices against so-called Korean War babies born of American fathers and Korean mothers; the schools were segregated, and many were urged to leave their mother in Korea and to go to the United States for their own good (Gage, 2007). Racial discrimination still exists, only in more subtle forms (e.g., Park, 2007).

However, such exclusivism is being challenged within and outside of the country as people, ideas and cultures move increasingly from one place to another in the globalization era. In particular, in 2007, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination raised concerns about discriminatory practices in Korea. Its official report stated that “the emphasis placed on the ethnic homogeneity of the State party [South Korea] may represent an obstacle to the promotion of understanding, tolerance and friendship among the different ethnic and national groups living on its territory” (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2007, p. 3). The growing discourse around multiculturalism and globalization celebrates the diversity of different cultures, and the emerging notion of global citizenship challenges the nationalist ideology (Moon, 2000). The rapidly growing number of minorities in Korea especially challenges Koreans’ identity as a homogeneous people.

In the next two sections, I will discuss the growing minority population within the South Korean territory in more detail in order to help the understanding of current social relations in Korea. The rest of paper will focus on how the government attempts to reconcile the nation’s long-standing ethnic nationalism with a newly emerging, perhaps foreign, ideology of multiculturalism through the discourses of education policy.

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this paper, I will limit my discussion to the case of South Korea. From here on, therefore, the term Korea will refer simply to South Korea.

## Multicultural Families: Growing Minorities in South Korea

South Korea is going through racial and ethnic diversification with a growing influx of foreign nationals each year. According to the Ministry of Justice (MOJ, 2011a), the percentage of foreigners residing in South Korea has steadily increased over the years (Table 1), and 1.39 million foreigners were living in Korea in 2011, making up almost 3% of the entire population (as cited in Yun, 2009). Even though this percentage might seem insignificant compared to that in ethnically diverse countries like the United States, the discrepancy between reality and the monoethnic ideology is becoming more and more salient as recent immigration patterns continue. This diversification of the population is largely due to the influx of foreign laborers and the significant number of international marriages between Korean citizens and foreign nationals. According to the MOJ data (2011b), migrant workers comprise the largest group of all foreign nationals residing in Korea, making up 42.5%, followed by foreigners married to Korean nationals (hereafter, marriage immigrants) who comprise 10.1% of the total foreign resident population.

Table 1: *Foreign Nationals and Korean Citizens Residing in South Korea (1990-2010)*

Year	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
<b>Foreign nationals</b>	49,507	269,641	491,324	747,467	1,249,765
<b>Korean citizens</b>	44,553,000	44,940,000	45,985,000	48,294,000	49,219,537
<b>Foreign national % of total population</b>	0.1	0.6	1.1	1.5	2.5

### Migrant Workers

As of 2011, 10% of the total migrant worker population is reported to be illegal. Unskilled laborers reportedly make up 92% of the labor force while the other 8% is reported to consist of workers with special expertise (MOJ, 2011b). In terms of the country of origin, Chinese of Korean heritage,<sup>2</sup> who account for 93% of the Chinese laborers, comprise the largest group of all migrant workers residing in Korea (Table 2) (MOJ, 2011b).

Table 2: *Migrant Workers Residing in South Korea by the Country of Origin (2011)*

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Legal residents</b>	<b>Illegal residents</b>
<b>Total</b>	595,098	540,259	54,839
<b>China</b>	320,241	305,570	14,671
<b>Korean-heritage</b>	297,932	290,226	7,706
<b>Vietnam</b>	64,831	53,458	11,373

<sup>2</sup> By Chinese of Korean heritage, I refer to descendants of Korean immigrants with citizenship of the People's Republic of China, as well as smaller groups of South and North Korean expatriates.

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Indonesia	28,522	23,590	4,932
Philippines	28,352	21,475	6,877
Thailand	22,728	19,350	3,378
Uzbekistan	21,078	19,332	1,746
Sri Lanka	19,868	18,141	1,727
United States	14,169	14,109	60
Others	75,309	65,234	10,075

**Immigrants Married to Korean Spouses**

According to the annual national statistics from 2005 to 2011, on average, 11% of all marriages were reported to be international marriages between a Korean and a foreigner. The international marriage pattern (Table 3) is also highly gendered in that 76% of the reported international marriages are between a Korean male and a foreign female (Korean Statistical Information Service, 2005-2011). In terms of the country of origin, Chinese nationals comprise the largest group followed by Vietnamese and Japanese. Aside from marriage immigrants from Japan, a significant number of marriage immigrants come from developing countries in Asia (MOJ, 2011c). According to Seol, Lee, and Cho (2006), males in rural areas and divorced men of low socioeconomic status tend to opt for international marriages, having difficulty finding Korean female spouses. Because these marriages involve a significant number of Korean males in low socioeconomic status, it is reported that more than half of the families with foreign wives and Korean husbands earn an income below the minimum cost of living (Park, 2007).

Table 3: *Foreign Nationals Married to Korean Citizens by Country of Origin (2011)*

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Total</b>	144,681	19,650	125,031
<b>China</b>	64,173	11,455	52,718
<b>Korean-heritage</b>	29,184	7,558	21,626
<b>Vietnam</b>	37,516	181	37,335
<b>Japan</b>	11,162	1,010	10,152
<b>Philippines</b>	8,367	227	8,140
<b>Cambodia</b>	4,583	6	4,577
<b>Thailand</b>	2,603	42	2,561
<b>Mongolia</b>	2,393	59	2,334
<b>United States</b>	2,410	1,808	602
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	1,840	52	1,788
<b>Russia</b>	1,319	70	1,249
<b>Canada</b>	1,158	1,009	149
<b>Others</b>	7,157	3,731	3,426

## Multicultural Children in Schools

This recent ethnic diversification greatly challenges Korean policy makers and schools, as they are used to dealing with a linguistically and ethnically homogeneous population. As of 2011, the Ministry of Public Administration and Security reported 151,154 children from international marriages in Korea: 93,537 children under school age (61.9%), 37,590 elementary school students (24.9%), 12,392 middle school students (8.2%), and 7,635 high school students (5.1%) (MOPAS, 2011). Since the international marriages began to increase in the late 1990s, more than half of the children born of such marriages are not yet of school age. Obviously in coming years as these children age this number will increase greatly (Table 4).

*Table 4: School Children Born of International Marriages by Year*

Year	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Total
2005	5,332	583	206	6,121
2006	6,795	924	279	7,998
2007	11,444	1,588	413	13,445
2011	37,590	12,392	7,635	57,617

All children born of international marriages are guaranteed Korean citizenship and all accompanying rights upon their birth, according to the Nationality Act as amended in 1997, which defines Korean citizens as people born of either one or two Korean national parents (Ministry of Government Legislation, 2011).<sup>3</sup> ESP reports that despite their equal legal rights as Korean citizens, many of these children have difficulty adapting to school because of limited Korean language skills, identity conflict, and ostracization (MEHRD, 2006b). According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Health and Welfare in 2005, 17.6% of students born of international marriages reported having been at one point or another ostracized by their classmates, and the most commonly identified cause for such treatment was “because he or she has a foreign mother” (34.1%).

As for children born of migrant laborers, there were reported to be 2,214 children at school age in 2011: 1,463 elementary school students, 489 middle school students, and 262 high school students. The small number of students compared to the size of migrant laborer population in Korea can be explained by the legal restrictions imposed on migrant workers. While marriage immigrants can apply for Korean citizenship (on the condition of forfeiting the citizenship of their country of origin) or permanent residency after two or more years of marriage, unskilled migrant workers, who make up 92% of all foreign workers in Korea, can only be employed for a maximum of 3 years in accordance with the Employment Permit System Act. Since the law prevents the long-term residency of migrant workers, they are not eligible for inviting their family to reside in Korea. However, some migrant workers secretly bring family members from their home countries or have children in Korea (Seol, 2003). Given that the majority of children born of migrant workers are illegal residents, it is hard to estimate their exact number (Oh, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Before the amendment, only children born of a Korean national father were granted Korean citizenship.

Therefore, the challenges faced by children of migrant workers largely derive from their illegal status. In 2005, it was reported that 95% of undocumented immigrant children at school age do not attend school due to fear of government crackdown and deportation, and poverty (Phillion, Wang, & Lee, 2009). In order to guarantee children's basic right for education, MEHRD simplified the elementary school admission requirements for undocumented children and banned immigration officials and police from tracking down children at schools (MEHRD, 2006b). Despite this effort, many problems still exist. Undocumented students' access to learning resources is restricted since many of them are not officially enrolled in schools, and they have difficulty entering middle school due to their lack of earlier enrollment records. (Phillion, et al., 2009).

### ESP: The Hidden Assumptions of Multiculturalism

Given this diversifying population and the increasing needs of students from multicultural backgrounds within the nation, in 2006, MEHRD announced *Educational Support Plan for Children from Multicultural Families* (ESP).<sup>4</sup> From the outset, ESP provides the definitions of "multiculturalism" and "multicultural family" as follows:

Multiculturalism: In contrary to ethnocentrism, a position that acknowledges the existence and individuality of different cultures in a nation (or society).

Multicultural family: A general term that refers to families consisting of people with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds from us. (MEHRD, 2006a, p. 1)

The notion of multiculturalism is foreign in the Korean context with its long-standing ideology of one language, one ethnicity, and one culture, and it is implicitly reflected in the fact that the English word, "multi-culturalism" is added in parentheses after the Korean word *damunhwajui*. Also, although simply introduced as the opposite concept of ethnocentrism in ESP, multiculturalism is a malleable concept that can derive from disparate orientations and be easily manipulated for a variety of political interests (Thompson, Fleming & Byram, 1996). Multiculturalism as outlined in ESP seems to conform to its interpretation in many parts of the world including the United States and Europe, and it largely corresponds to what Hall (2002) defines as *difference multiculturalism*. Difference multiculturalists call for "the neutralization of prejudice through the eventual acceptance of difference," instead of critically reflecting on the basis of inequality (Hall, 2002, p. 62). In other words, difference multiculturalists passively acknowledge cultures of outsiders while keeping the boundaries of their own cultures. Similarly, throughout ESP (MEHRD, 2006a) as well as in its definition of multiculturalism, it is mentioned that different cultures should be "acknowledged" (p. 1), "respected" (p. 1, p. 15) and "understood" (p. 1, p. 14, p. 15); but there is little critical reflection on the majority's conception of ethnicity, culture, and nation. Furthermore, by juxtaposing multiculturalism with ethnocentrism, cultural difference can be potentially

<sup>4</sup> The analysis in this section is largely based on the official English version of ESP (MEHRD, 2006b). However, I have translated and cited some parts of the original Korean version of ESP (MEHRD, 2006a) since they were left out of the English version.

essentialized as ethnic difference, alluding to a false assumption that a culture exclusively belongs to one ethnic group. In this respect, Turner (1994) cautions against a common pitfall of multiculturalist approaches that “multiculturalism tends to become a form of identity politics in which the concept of culture becomes merged with that of ethnic identity” (p. 407).

Secondly, the term *multicultural family* not only adopts the notion of difference multiculturalism but also takes on a recontextualized meaning within the context of Korea. The term has its own history. It was first proposed in 2004 as a politically neutral term by the Healthy Family Civic Coalition, comprising thirty civic organizations in Korea. Then, ESP officially adopted the term in 2006, and since then, multicultural family has been commonly used in political discourse as well as in other domains of the public sphere (Won, 2007). ESP became the authoritative source text, and the term or its definition has hardly been challenged. However, a critical reading of the definition reveals the fact that in defining the multicultural family, ESP contrasts people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds with “us” (MEHRD, 2006a, p. 1), who are assumed to be Korean nationals of Korean ethnicity. This contrast and the use of an exclusive term us make the distinction between the dominant Korean ethnic group and others salient. Turner (1994) finds a similar dichotomous distinction of cultures drawn, ironically, from multiculturalist approaches in the academy:

The focus of the multiculturalist challenge to these aspects of the traditional curriculum ... has ironically led many academic multiculturalists, even as they call for a decentering of the dominant Eurocentric notion of rich culture, to adopt much of its schematic content as the form of *their own oppositional conception of minority culture*. (p. 412, emphasis added)

This narrow definition of multicultural family coheres with the way ESP specifies its policy targets in a later section. ESP classifies its policy targets into two groups: “children of international marriages and children of migrant workers residing in Korea” (MEHRD, 2006b, p. 3). This classification potentially excludes North Korean refugees and returning overseas Koreans and many other groups that may come from diverse backgrounds. More fundamentally, the fact that the multicultural education policy does not target majority Korean-born nationals of Korean ethnicity is based on the assumption that multicultural education, or special care, is only needed for minority students.

In fact, ESP tends to highlight problems or challenges faced by multicultural students. The following excerpt provides rationales for multicultural education:

Many children from multicultural backgrounds have been identified as experiencing study difficulties and identity confusions, due to factors including poor legal and social status, inability to register as Korean nationalities, economic setbacks, lack of Korean language skills and obstacles in adapting to Korean culture. The education ministry recognizes that measures should be provided to address this problem and to prevent the threat of an educational gap. (MEHRD, 2006b, p. 2)

Here, ESP attributes all of the problems to the shortcomings of children from multicultural backgrounds. However, the real problem may lie in the exclusive

practices and ideology prevalent in schools and society in general. For instance, in later sections, the low academic achievement of these students is attributed to their lack of Korean language skills, which reportedly derive from the limited Korean proficiency of foreign mothers; culturally exclusive school environments are hardly questioned. These students experience “obstacles in adapting to Korean culture,” but the exclusivity of Korean culture is never challenged. In this respect, Erickson (1987) argues that in schools, “cultural difference is seen as necessarily leading to trouble and conflict and cultural similarity is seen (implicitly at least) as necessarily leading to rapport and the absence of conflict” (p. 342).

Although the discourse of ESP implicitly embeds a deficit orientation toward children from multicultural backgrounds, the announcement of a multicultural education policy itself and some policy measures under ESP has opened up ideological and implementational space (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007) for changing exclusive ideology and practices in Korea. The following are some of the promising policy measures proposed in ESP (MEHRD, 2006b):

Strengthening the genuine role of schools

- Have married immigrants and foreign parents serve as foreign language teachers in after-school courses.
- Have schools serve as local community centers for the education and integration of multicultural families.

Enhancing teacher capacity

- Provide at least two hours of education on multiculturalism in teachers’ training programs.
- Offer Korean language and culture training for teachers.
- Offer incentives to teachers with Korean as a Second Language (KSL) teacher certificate.

Improving the textbook and curriculum

- Analyze all textbooks in use at schools and review the deletion of references on homogeneity.
- Revise the national curriculum to add contents emphasizing the value of appreciating different cultures and acquiring non-prejudicial views on foreigners.

Supporting dual language learning

- Encourage children to keep using their mothers’ native language and ask children to teach simple expressions in that language to his/her classmates.

Some aspects of these measures may not be ideal; for example, in supporting dual-language learning, ESP does not take an official measure to provide KSL or Korean-English bilingual programs in school. However, these measures have great potential for changing exclusive school culture. Particularly, the measures for strengthening the role of school can bring together the school and local communities by offering an open space for communication and by acknowledging the resources multicultural families bring to school. Also, through teacher training and the revision of national curriculum, multicultural education may eventually

not be limited to children from multicultural backgrounds but can be extended to teachers and all students. According to McDermott (1987), minority students are stigmatized because the school system focuses on the children's school failure as a problem. He argues that "we need to explain why we have organized such an elaborate apparatus for pinpointing the failures of our children, when we could put all that energy into organizing more learning" (p. 363). The focus of multicultural education should not be on identifying problems of minority students but on creating an inclusive learning environment for all students. If these measures are further developed and implemented according to individual school environments, the change toward better education may be attainable despite the implicit ideology of ethnic nationalism interwoven in the discourse of ESP.

In order to examine the follow-up of ESP, in the following section, I will focus on one of the measures provided in ESP, the revision of the national curriculum and textbooks. For the scope of this study, I will particularly focus my analysis on the *Guidelines for Middle School Korean Language Arts Textbook Writing* (hereafter, Guidelines) developed under the 2007 national curriculum. The analysis shows how multiculturalism is juxtaposed with ethnic and linguistic nationalism in the seeming coherence of the discourse.

### Korean Language Arts Textbook Guidelines: Difference Made Invisible

With the 2007 national curriculum, the Guidelines<sup>5</sup> were published by MEHRD in August, 2007. In the Guidelines, Korean language arts is named *gugeo* [國語, national language],<sup>6</sup> and the term merits an historical account of what ideologies it indexes. According to Paek (2004), the earliest historical record of the term *gugeo* dates back to the late Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392), and the term also briefly appeared in *Hunminjeongeum Haerye* [訓民正音 解例, Explanations and Examples of the Correct/Proper Sounds for the Instruction of the People] (1446). However, it was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that *gugeo* started to be commonly used, often in association with nationalistic ideology tied to the emergence of modern nation-states. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Si-gyeong Ju, the influential linguist who named the Korean script *Hangeul*, played a significant role in disseminating *gugeo* as the language that represents the nation and people of Korea. In his essay, "Gugeowa Gungmunui Piryo" [The Necessity of National Language and Literature] (1907), Ju stressed, "From now on, we should honor our national language and literature, and make efforts to pursue their rules and philosophy" (as translated from Korean in Paek, 2004, p. 132). At the same time, under Japanese colonization, the term *gugeo* was forcefully used to refer to Japanese language and Japanese language arts taught in school, while Korean language and Korean language arts were referred to as *Joseoneo* [朝鮮語, the language of Joseon] (Choi, 1987). Such use of *gugeo* created the ideological connection among ethnicity, nation, and national language, which was reinforced by the slogan *nissen ittai* [Japan and Korea as One] as discussed earlier. Since independence from Japan, *gugeo*, the term loaded with nationalistic ideology, has referred to the Korean language and Korean language arts. In recent years, as Korean has started to be taught as a foreign language, *gugeo*

<sup>5</sup> The Guidelines (2007) were only published in Korean and therefore all translations that follow are my own.

<sup>6</sup> The term *gugeo* generally refers to the academic subject taught in schools, not only in the Guidelines.

seems to have added another layer of meaning: *gugeo* often refers to Korean as a native language, in contrast with *hangugeo* [韓國語, Korean language] (originally a linguistic term for the Korean language) referring to Korean learned as a foreign or second language. Therefore, the fact that Korean language arts is named *gugeo*, instead of *hangugeo*, alludes to the nationalistic ideology the term indexes.

This ideology also permeates the characterization of Korean language arts in the Guidelines. From the outset, the Guidelines state, “the 2007 Korean language arts curriculum stresses students’ identity as a member of the *gugeo* speech community by characterizing *gugeo* as the language that reflects the lives of Korean people” (MEHRD, 2007, p. 3). Further, the Guidelines specify the nature of Korean language arts as “the most fundamental academic subject that enables a learner to improve languages skills necessary to lead a normal life as a citizen, to grow their identity as a member of the Republic of Korea, and to foster linguistic and cultural knowledge to live in the globalized world” (p. 4). These characterizations of *gugeo* reflect how closely, and even exclusively, the use of Korean language is related to Korean identity, and implicitly suggests that one should inevitably become part of the Korean speech community to be part of the nation.

The Guidelines also put forward general guidelines for textbook writing, one of which specifically defines desirable attitudes for one to have toward diverse cultures:

(6) Textbooks shall be developed to take a neutral stance that does not favor the interest of any particular groups or individuals. . . In social and cultural aspects, education should be carried out in *respect of the diversity of cultures* and to aim for a democratic and egalitarian world devoid of any forms of discrimination. Moreover, for the sake of *the development of ethnic language and culture*, textbooks should be developed to foster peace-oriented and inclusive attitudes in preparation for the unification era (p. 4, emphasis added).

This particular sequence is confusing at a first glance. While textbooks should maintain neutrality toward diverse cultures, social groups, and individuals, they should also aim to develop “ethnic [Korean] language and culture.” Kang (2011) argues that even though ethnic nationalism and multiculturalism are incompatible concepts, Korean policy makers often put these concepts together without due consideration.

However, as seen in the case of ESP, it should be noted that multiculturalism can also foster the hegemony of dominant groups through implicit discursive devices. If we examine the contexts where multiculturalism and ethnic nationalism are invoked, we can trace them back to the logic that made these two concepts compatible with each other. In the sentence, “education should be realized to respect the diversity of cultures and to aim for a democratic and egalitarian world devoid of any forms of discrimination,” it should be noted that “diversity of cultures” is juxtaposed with “a democratic and egalitarian world.” Here, “world” in the original Korean text is *segye*. In Korean, *segye* specifically refers to the global world in which the Korean society is situated. Therefore, the multicultural understanding promoted by the Guidelines implies the cultural diversity of the world, rather than that of the Korean society. Therefore, the assumed logic here is: even though Korea may be a homogeneous nation, Koreans should have understanding toward cultural differences since Korea is situated in the globalized world where diverse cultures meet. This logic predicated on a monocultural Korea is evidenced by the following statement that calls for the

reunification of South and North Korea based on the supposedly homogenous culture, language, and ethnicity: “for the sake of the development of ethnic language and culture, textbooks should be developed to foster peace-oriented and inclusive attitudes in preparation for the unification era.”

Specific guidelines for the subfields of Korean language arts, such as listening/speaking and reading/writing, also seem to follow suit, in that there are mentions of both multiculturalism and ethnic language and culture, which are respectively situated in the globalized world and the unification of North and South Korea. This is a huge step back from ESP. Even though in ESP social inequality is hardly problematized, the presence of diverse cultural groups within Korea is at least explicitly acknowledged. The Guidelines, however, make differences within the nation invisible, by turning away attention from the multicultural situation of Korea to that of the globalized world.

Lastly, despite these persistent discursive practices that suppress the voice of others, hope may be still found in the current textbook development and selection system. Earlier MEHRD designated only one national textbook for each school subject in earlier national curricula. Since 2000, however, for most school subjects, multiple textbooks have been developed by individual publishers following the MEHRD (or MEST since 2008) textbook writing guidelines (Kim, Lee, Lee, & Cho, 2010). Even though the final textbook drafts must be approved by MEST to be used in individual schools, the mere existence of multiple publishers in the textbook market nowadays alludes to potential for producing discourse diverging from the ideology of policy statements. Further research may be needed to examine the influence of multicultural education policies and textbook development system on the actual textbook contents (e.g, Kang, 2011).

### Conclusion

What does multicultural education mean in South Korea? Is it the efforts to bring the voices of students from different cultural backgrounds, or is it a nationalistic education imposed on multicultural children to integrate them into the Korean society? At this point, at least in mainstream school settings, the answer may be closer to the latter. The analysis of the policy documents for multicultural education and textbook writing has revealed the deeply embedded homogeneous ideology of Korean language and ethnicity. However, the prospect of multicultural education in Korea may not be so grim, in that the new policy is at an initial stage, and that implementational space has just recently opened up. Within the seemingly highly regulated curriculum, some agency is given to the individual publishers, and according to Kang (2011), potentially positive discourses have been already initiated by some publishers. These moves were in fact possible in part because the government’s multicultural initiative allowed for a platform to represent the voices of others in mainstream education in Korea. Furthermore, even though top-down policy measures may not represent multiculturalism in which all cultures are truly respected and embraced, individual teachers as active social agents can create more culturally responsive learning environments by making efforts to listen to individual students and scaffold their learning, building upon what they already know (Schultz, 2003). It may not be easy to transform the discourse of ethnic and linguistic nationalism that has accumulated over a long-

standing history. However, truly multicultural education can be realized from the bottom up as individual teachers, students, and other stakeholders in public education critically interpret and challenge the current education policy and strive to produce culturally inclusive discourses and practices.

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